

Message Text

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NODIS

FOR DR. BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FOL RPT DAMASCUS 4704 ACTION SECSTATE 25 JUL 77 QUOTE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4704

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, US

SUBJECT: BEGIN VISIT

REF: STATE 170055

1. SUMMARY:

AFTER SEVERAL DAYS DELAY, WAS ABLE PRESENT OUR SUMMING
UP OF BEGIN VI IT TO WASHINGTON JULY 25 TO PRESIDENTIAL
POLITICAL ADVISOR. ADVISOR CRITICQED U.S. ARMS SALES
TO ISRAEL AND SAID IT APPEARED U.S. JEWISH COMMUNITY HAD
GAINED CONTROL OVER NEW ADMINISTRATION. HE WAS GLOOMY
ABOUT PEACE PROSPECTS AND NONCOMMITTAL ON CURRENT STATE OF
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SYRO-EGYPTIAN POLITICAL COORDINATION. END SUMMARY.

2. NOTIFIED PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE SECRETARY JULY 21 THAT I HAD
MESSAGE I WOULD LIKE TO DELIVER TO THE PRESIDENT SUMMING UP
OUR VIEWS ON BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. PRIVATE SECRETARY
SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MEET WITH ASSAD DURING
THE NEXT DAY OR TWO. WITH KHADDAM OUT OF COUNTRY, I

DECIDED TO WAIT TO SEE PRESIDENT. ON SUNDAY, JULY 24, ASSAD PASSED WORD ASKING THAT I MEET WITH HIM POLITICAL ADVISOR ADIB DAOUDY WHICH I DID JULY 25. DAOUDY REMARKED PRESIDENT OVER PAST DAYS HAD BEEN HEAVILY PREOCCUPIED WITH A SERIES OF LEBANESE DELEGATIONS. PRESENTED HIM WITH REPORT DRAWN FROM REFTEL WITH REQUEST THAT HE CONVEY IT TO ASSAD. HE PROMISED TO HAVE REPORT TRANSLATED AND CONVEYED TO ASSAD SOONEST.

3. DAOUDY THEN COMMENTED, AS USUAL CAREFULLY INTRODUCING HIS COMMENTS AS "PERSONAL OPINION," THAT BEGIN'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON APPEARED TO HAVE CONSOLIDATED HIS POSITION BOTH WITHIN ISRAEL AND U.S. BEGIN HAD SOUGHT TO CONVINCE AMERICANS AS WELL AS ISRAELIS THAT HE IS MODERATE BETTER ABLE TO SERVE THE INTERESTS OF PEACE THAN THE LABOR PARTY. "JUDGING BY THE COMPLIMENTS BESTOWED UPON HIM BY PRESIDENT CARTER, VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE AND SECRETARY VANCE," DAOUDY OBSERVED, "HE APPEARS TO HAVE SUCCEEDED IN SO PORTRAYING HI SELF." DAOUDY ADDED THAT THE PRESS LEAKS FROM THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE INDICATED THAT BEGIN WAS SIMPLY PLAYING WITH WORDS WHEN HE SAID ISRAEL WOULD HAVE NO PRE-CONDITIONS FOR GENEVA. BEGIN'S VIEWS WERE CLEAR CONCERNING THE WEST BANK AND HIS INTENTION TO RETAIN PARTS OF GOLAN AND SINAI. I COMMENTED THAT IT WAS NONETHELESS USEFUL TO HAVE BEGIN PUBLICLY REITERATE HE WOULD GO TO GENEVA TO DISCUSS ALL ISSUE AN NO QUESTION WOULD BE A PRIORI EXCLUDED
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FROM NEGOTIATIONS.

4. THEN DREW ON PARA 11 STATE REFTEL IN DISCUSSING ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE DOMESTIC U.S. SUPPORT FOR ITS POLICY TOWARD MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS. DAOUDY LISTENED CAREFULLY AND STARTED TO TAKE COPIOUS NOTES. I SAID WE HAD NOT SOUGHT TO CONFRONT BEGIN WITH OUR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BUT HAD MADE CLEAR THAT OUR VIEWS ON THE ELEMENTS OF THE SETTLEMENT WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER HAD DESCRIBED TO ASSAD AND OTHER ARAB LEADERS AND REITERATED IN VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS, REMAINED UNCHANGED. ASKED IF THIS APPLIED TO WEST BANK, I REPLIED CATEGORICALLY IT DID; OUR POSITION ON BORDERS AS WE HAD STATED IT TO ASSAD AND OTHER WAS UNCHANGED.

5. DAOUDY THEN CITED UNHAPPILY BEGIN'S SUCCESS IN SECURING \$250 MILLION IN MILITARY AID BEFORE HE LEFT THE U.S. DAOUDY SAID THAT HE COULD APPRECIATE ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO AVOID CREATING A UNIFIED BLOC OF PRO-BEGIN SENTIMENT IN AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY BUT HE HAD TO ASK HIMSELF WHETHER THE ARMS DEAL DID NOT SYMBOLIZE THAT COMMUNITY'S GAINING CONTROL OVER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. REPLIED

MILITARY ITEMS AT ISSUE HAD BEEN IN SUSPENSE FOR PERIOD WHICH EXTENDED BACK INTO RABIN'S TENURE IN OFFICE. FRIENDS OF ISRAEL HAD BEEN COMPLAINING THAT CARTER ADMINISTRATION WAS BEING TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE TO ISRAEL'S ARMS NEEDS. ADDED THAT HE WELL KNEW OUR ARMS RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL WAS AND WOULD BE ONGOING. TIMING OF OUR ANNOUNCEMENT, OF COURSE, HAD POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE BUT EMPHASIZED THERE WAS NOTHING DRAMATIC IN THIS LATEST SALE. HE IN TURN COMMENTED THAT THE TIMING OF OUR ANNOUNCEMENT APPEARED TO BE A SPECIAL PRESENT TO BEGIN DESIGNED TO REINFORCE THE PRIME'S POSITION.

6. HE THEN ASKED HOW WE FORESAW PROSPECTS OVER THE NEXT MONTHS. I RECALLED PRESIDENT CARTER'S EXPRESSED HOPE TO SEE GENEVA CONVENED IN OCTOBER. SAID I
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KNEW THIS WOULD BE CENTRAL TO THE SECRETARY'S DISCUSSIONS HERE NEXT WEEK. THE STILL INSUPERABLE DIFFICULTY WAS PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION. WE EXPECTED THE ARAB STATES TO HELP IN THIS REGARD.

7. THEN RECALLED THAT IN THE SUMMER OF 1975 THERE HAD BEEN A SERIES OF SPECIAL EGYPTIAN EMISSARIES TRAVELING TO DAMASCUS, APPARENTLY TO ENSURE COORDINATION OF SYRO-EGYPTIAN POSITIONS. BUT SYRIAN ACCUSATIONS POST SINAI II INDICATED THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE IN THESE CONTACTS. THIS SUMMER, AT LEAST AS FAR AS I WAS AWARE THERE HAD BEEN NO SUCH EXCHANGE OF EMISSARIES. DID HE HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE QUALITY OF SYRO-EGYPTIAN COORDINATION TODAY? WE HAD REPEATEDLY MADE EXPLICIT OUR CONVICTION ABOUT THE ESSENTIALITY OF CLOSE INTER-ARAB COORDINATION TO THE PEACE PROCESS. DAUDY ASKED IF WE MEANT COORDINATION BETWEEN JUST THE CONFRONTATION STATES. I REPLIED WE INCLUDED SAUDI ARABIA, AS WITNESSED BY THE SECRETARY'S VISIT THERE IN FEBRUARY, HIS INTENTION TO RETURN THERE ON THIS TRIP AND PRINCE FAHD'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. DAUDY RECALLED STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT ASSAD TO ARNAUD DEBORCHGRAVE LAST WEDNESDAY THAT ASSAD WAS CONVINCED EGYPT AND SYRIA "ARE IN COMPLETE ACCORD" AND ASSAD'S FLAT STATEMENT THAT HE VERY MUCH DOUBTED SADAT WOULD NOT ACCEPT A SEPARATE DEAL. ONLY THEN DID DAUDY ADD HE WAS PERSONALLY UNINFORMED ABOUT THE EXTENT OF CURRENT SYRO-EGYPTIAN COORDINATION.

8. COMMENT:

FACT THAT DAUDY HIGHLIGHTED US ARMS FOR ISRAEL ISSUE, AMONG ALL THX DISCUSSED IN REPORT ON BEGIN VISIT, SUGGESTS HOW MUCH IT CONTRIBUTES
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TO SYRIAN PESSIMISM ABOUT PEACE PROSPECTS. IT IS TRICKY
QUESTION TO HANDLE WITH THE SYRIANS BUT I RECOMMEND SECRETARY
ADDRESS IT DURING HIS VISIT HERE. I FRANKLY FELT WHEN
SECRETARY KISSINGER DISCUSSED IT WITH ASSAD
AT VARIOUS TIMES IN 1974-75 AND SOUGHT TO PLACE U.S. ARMS
SUPPLY TO ISRAEL IN PERSPECTIVE, HE WAS UNABLE TO
CONVINCE SYRIANS THAT WE WERE CONTROLLING THIS SUPPLY FOR
MAXIMUM POLITICAL BENEFIT TO THE PEACE PROCESS. PROBLEM IS
THAT OUR SILENCE COULD ALSO BE MISINTERPRETED.
MURPHY

UNQUOTE VANCE

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